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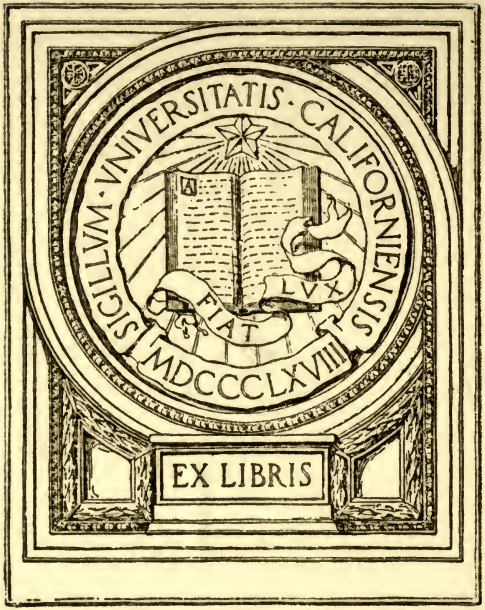
American Dramatists Series

Wilderness Rose

Eve Owen Cochran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American Dramatists Series

WILDERNESS ROSE

BY

EVE OWEN COCHRAN

A play in four acts especially adapted for the use of American Historical Societies and Chapters of the D. A. R.

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Dedicated to my husband
WILLIAM MILLAR COCHRAN

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Mistress Drew, mother of three unmarried daughters, becomes jealous of Naomi Dickinson, because John Sylvester, the Minister's son, had admired Pentecost Drew, the oldest daughter, until Naomi and her father came to the settlement.

After Naomi's father dies and while John Sylvester is away finishing a course of study at Harvard, Mistress Drew spreads the story that Naomi is a witch. She rouses such prejudice against the girl that Naomi under the guidance of Warawan, a friendly Indian, plans to escape to another settlement that she may not harm her lover's work for God.

The Selectmen and Council appear at the house of the Minister, acquaint him with their intention of arresting and trying Mistress Naomi, and in spite of his defense of her are about to inform her of their decree when the meeting is broken up by the entrance of Mistress Drew and other women, who have just seen Naomi depart with the "evil one" into the forest. The Minister and all except Goody, caretaker for the Minister, go in search of Naomi. They find her with Warawan, the friendly Indian, tending the Indians of the settlement who are suffering from small-pox. They being unseen by her are glad to escape with their repentant hearts turned in her favor.

Meanwhile Goody, the caretaker, has gone to Naomi's house and acquainted her with the decree of the Council. Goody and Warawan persuade

Naomi to hasten her departure that night. Warawan, who has heard the Minister say his son is expected to return that night trusts to meet him somewhere upon the Bay Road and to give Naomi into his care. Naomi, who does not expect her lover for some days, thinks only of those who may follow her to bring her back to trial.

The Minister is the same night again visited by Mistress Drew, who has been to Naomi's house to offer her the hospitality of her home, and found that she has fled. Mistress Drew is beside herself with remorse.

The men all go out to search for Naomi. They find her at last with her lover on the Bay Road. He denounces them all roundly for their sin. Naomi is persuaded to return and all ends happily.

WILDERNESS ROSE

A PLAY OF THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD IN NEW ENGLAND

Persons of the Play

Naomi Dickinson, *A Puritan maiden.*
Stephen Dickinson, *Her aged father.*
Rev. Jonathan Sylvester, *Minister.*
John Sylvester, *A Harvard student, to succeed his father as minister of the settlement.*
Goody, *Caretaker to minister.*
Richard Shepard, *A farmer.*
Asa Stone, Joseph Bayley, *Commissioners.*
Daniel Torrey, Israel Drew, *Selectmen with three others.*
Anna Drew, *Wife of Israel.*
Pentecost, Abigail, Lydia, *Their daughters.*
Goodwife Palmer, *A widow, in love with Goodman Shepard.*
Caleb Stetson, *Recorder.*
Elizabeth Stetson, *His wife.*
Margaret Stetson, *Their child.*
Job Pratt, *Constable.*
Dinah Pratt, *His wife.*
Abner Phillips, *Drummer.*
Warawan, *A friendly Indian.*

Any number of men, women and their children, a few friendly Indians with their squaws and papooses.

Carlos Troyer's Indian songs may be used by Warawan.

Indian music by orchestra between the acts.

WILDERNESS ROSE

ACT I

The woodland surrounding a little Puritan settlement of Western Massachusetts, summer of 1660.

The forest trees are not of great size and the underbrush is fairly well cleared by the frequent fires of the Indians and settlers. Pine trees predominate, though oaks are frequent. The background shows a range of hills with a view of the great river. The stage shows the settlement in part; a little to the left the meetinghouse of sawn boards (18x26) and thatched roof. Window at either side, door at the end facing the main path to the cabins. On the front of the meetinghouse are posted various notices. Paths lead away from meetinghouse in different directions and rude log-houses with stone chimneys at end and thatch roofs, straggle at intervals along the paths.

The foreground shows the main path leading out of the settlement (to right of stage). Back of and below the meetinghouse (to left of stage) is a path to the brook which has a spring of drinking water flowing out of a rock.

(*All stage directions from point of view of the audience*).

As the curtain rises, the sound of a drum is heard and Abner Phillips, the drummer, appears coming down the main path of houses toward the meetinghouse, drumming lustily. From the houses come five men who meet before the door of meetinghouse. All

wear the regulation Puritan costume, leather leggins and jacket, cloth breeches and black sugar-loaf hat, deep white collar and cuffs. All carry flintlocks. At the prolonged beating of the drum, men, women and children pour out of the houses and flock up the paths to the meetinghouse. In spite of the "sad colored" Puritan costumes they present a festive appearance and are well set off by some friendly Indians who mingle with them, the squaws, especially handsome in short cloth mantles of faded red or blue with leather sleeves and beaded belts, they are, for the most part, straight and slender with long black hair combed back and confined with band. The children frisk and play about shooting toy arrows. As all approach the group about the meetinghouse door, the leader of the five gestures for silence. He is spokesman for the selectmen.

DANIEL TORREY—Neighbors and friends, 'tis now far past the time, according to the tidings that have come, when the expected strangers from the east to our good settlement, should have arrived. All preparation has been made by these (indicates the other four) whom ye appointed to receive, with me, the wayfarers and welcome them with cheer. As best we might we five have labored, planned, and now affirm with praise and gratitude that temporary habitation, food and plenty is assured to all.

PEOPLE—It is well, God be praised. It is work well done.

TORREY—Truly, I think it does behoove us now, as hosts to fare upon the path away to meet the strangers and with aid and cheer, conduct them thither.

(*The Minister, very old and stooped, in black with*

white bands steps forward. His benign face radiates a light as he moves along. His son, dark, manly, very genial, walks beside, as if to support him. The old man stops before the receiving committee and raises his hands in blessing).

MINISTER—May God be with ye, and be not cast down, if ye do fare a longer time upon the way, than now is thot of, for it well may be that some upon the journey from the Bay have fallen sick. It were not strange, indeed, if some delay hath come of hostile ones to be dealt with and satisfied. If in his providence God hath—

(*He is interrupted by the shrill voice of a woman on the outskirts of the group*).

OLD WOMAN—Minister! Oh Reverend Sir!

MINISTER—(*Looking over the heads of the group*). It is the voice of Faithful Mellen speaks. What would you say, Faithful?

OLD WOMAN—(*In high voice*). Oh Reverend Sir, I have far sight, and, out upon the path I see men moving, truly it is so.

(*The men grasp their flint-locks*).

PEOPLE—Indians! perchance hostile Indians! Indians! Indians!

MINISTER—Warawan! Where is our faithful Warawan? Come forward watchful one and tell us if our people now approach.

WARAWAN—(*Steps forward. Puts his ear to the ground then rises*). Ay, friend of the Great Spirit, Warawan hears the feet of his white brothers.

OLD WOMAN—(*Querulously*). Yea, 'tis not Indians, Faithful Mellen says, and she has eyes to see withal. What, pray you, friends, would hostile Indians do upon the path in the broad light of day.

(*Cackles*).

TORREY—(*Ignoring the old woman, coming to front again, with dignity*). Methinks I, too, can glimpse them, Reverend Sir.

PEOPLE—Ay, they come! They come! They come! Let us go to meet them. (*Children frisk joyously about*).

TORREY—Let us have order first. Let the children be not too boisterous in their welcoming. I think 'twere well if our beloved and most reverend friend and Minister were first upon the path, his honored son beside him and so let follow, that there be some calm, we whom you have appointed, next the commissioners, the recorder next, the constable and then the families in good and regular order. (*As the names of the different officers are spoken they step into line and stand waiting*).

DRUMMER—(*At Torrey's elbow*). Am I not an officer?

CARETAKER FOR MEETINGHOUSE—And I, caretaker for the meetinghouse, you have forgot, I should follow next after the Constable, Goodman Torrey.

TORREY—(*Waving them aside*). Peace, Peace, 'tis no time for quibbling. Is every man now present?

SMALL BOY—Nay, the cow-herd's in the forest.

MOTHER—(*Boxing his ears soundly*). Be silent or thou'll be sent to spell him, froward one.

MINISTER—(*Facing the people*). My people let us not forget the day we came upon this wilderness and found none but good Warawan to give us cheer. Of that ye have in store give liberally and with glad hearts, remembering that of the blessed it is said they took the stranger in, and made him glad who was

athirst and hungered. Come, Goodman Torrey, let us go forward now.

(*As they approach the path, there emerges from the woods the leader of the little band of newcomers, Goodman Henchman, a dark and stalwart man, carrying two small children, walking beside him his wife, a firm, robust woman*).

MINISTER—(*To Henchman*). Welcome! Welcome! Valiant for the truth! May God bless and prosper thee in this new home. I am thy Minister.

HENCHMAN—God be praised for it and for thy hearty welcome, Reverend Sir. I am called Henchman, this is my wife and these my little ones. (*He stands by the minister's side as the procession comes down the path*). This is John Herendeen and his bride Lizabeth. They have been wed a month. This is their first home.

MINISTER—(*Taking their hands*). May God who only makes true marriages combine your hearts in one.

HENCHMAN—This is the blacksmith that I wrote thee of, Stephen Flood, and his wife Judith.

MINISTER—I give thee hearty welcome, blacksmith. Thou'rt needed here, there's much work for thy hands. These are thy sons? (*Gazes down at two half grown boys*).

BLACKSMITH—Ay, twins, Minister, like as two chestnut burrs, and bursting with mischief.

MINISTER—(*Smiling down at boys*). Good stuff for building of our Commonwealth.

(*An old man approaches, supported by a maiden*).

HENCHMAN—Our teacher, Mr. Dickinson, fell sick upon the journey. (*Indicates the old man*).

HENCHMAN—This is his daughter, Mistress

Naomi, whose gladsome heart has cheered us all the way.

(*Naomi comes into the open. Her gown of old blue is full in the skirt and quite short, with flat bodice, white collar, cuffs and cap. Her golden hair hangs in two heavy plaits. Her face has great beauty, spiritual as compared with the heavier faces of the other women. Her expression is one of great interest in her strange adventure. The Minister looks upon her with a delight in her beauty, takes her hand. She drops her eyes modestly*).

MINISTER—Thou art welcome, Mistress Naomi, thou, and thy sunny heart shall do us good as thou hast done these upon the journey's way.

(*Drops her hand and turns to the old man*).

(*She lifts her eyes and meets those of John Sylvester, dark and earnest, fixed upon her. He comes toward her and takes her hand. They are observed as they stand thus, while the committee wait to greet her*).

SYLVESTER—(*Slowly, and as tho he called her*). Naomi Dickinson!

NAOMI—(*Wonderingly, her eyes still on his*). Yes.

(*He lets her hand fall and steps aside but it is evident that he has eyes for no other. The people press about her and greet her with great heartiness, all but a little group in the foreground Goody, caretaker to the Minister, Mistress Drew and her daughters, Abigail, Lydia and Pentecost.*)

GOODY—(*Mischievously to Mistress Drew*). Thus fair doth call to fair, Hail! I am come whom men dub love! Did'st note the meeting, neighbor?

MISTRESS DREW—Thou art ever ready with thy tongue, Goody.

GOODY—Ay, and wi' my eye, neighbor. I'm quick in the uptake they say.

(*Pentecost, the older daughter, the finest type of New England womanhood, possessed of mental and spiritual force walks frankly to Naomi and pleased with her loveliness stands with an arm about her*).

NAOMI—(*To Pentecost*). Methinks Heaven will be like to this.

PENTECOST—In joy and greeting greatly like, methinks. Mistress Naomi, we shall be friends. Thou art most welcome, truly. Up yonder but a little space, thy father's house stands waiting, 'twas built for him, for there has not 'till now been teacher here, and he's welcome, as thou art.

NAOMI—Mistress, thou art most kind, 'tis written in thine eyes so frank and brown. (*Looks into Pentecost's eyes*).

MINISTER—(*Raising his voice*). My people!

PEOPLE—Hush, hush, hush, he has somewhat to impart, be still, be still, be still.

MINISTER—God has wrought wonderfully to bring these friends through the strange wilderness to us at last, where, in His Providence, they shall never want, but with us work together for all good. And, now, because they weary and need staying, guide them into their homes, comfort them as ye know well how to do, in body and in spirit. May God have all in His most holy keeping.

(*People disperse, John Sylvester conducting the aged teacher and Naomi to their house. Warawan sits silently under a tree whittling. No one pays him any heed. He is a familiar figure like a part*

of the landscape. Last of all to leave are Goodwife Drew and her daughters. Pentecost has joined the group. As they turn to go away (exit to left)—

GOODWIFE DREW—(*To Pentecost, angrily*)—Prithee, come along and fall on no more strangers' necks.

PENTECOST—(*Enthusiastically*). Is she not passing fair? Not in our buxom way but like a flower.

MISTRESS DREW—(*Sourly*). An soon plucked, I doubt not. Did'st note how Master Sylvester's eyes did fix themselves upon her and could not look away? 'Twas very marked. Did'st hear what that old meddler, Parson's Goody said? Give heed then, Pentecost.

ABIGAIL DREW—Ay, Master Sylvester stammered like a boy caught in some mischief, could not speak at all.

LYDIA DREW—Could not, sayest thou? Nay, I was nearer and I heard him say in tones that thrilled the marrow of my bones, "Naomi Dickinson!"

ABIGAIL—(*Eagerly*). Nay, Mistress Naomi, was it not?

LYDIA—(*Shaking her head emphatically*). Naomi Dickinson.

PENTECOST—Her beauty did amaze him and 'tis not surprising, there's no one here can hold a candle to her. Methinks she's very like a forest flower.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Fiercely*). And thou art like the maize, precious and full of virtue, hold what thou hast Pentecost. He has cared for thee I know.

PENTECOST—(*Smiling*). Ay, good mother, as a companion I will pass, I know. Had he a choice of sisters he'd take me, mayhap.

GOODWIFE DREW — (*Determinedly*). Prithee

cease thy folly, I've seen him look at thee with other eyes, with other look, I say, than brother's look. (*Pointing up the path*). See how they go like lovers at first sight, take warning, Pentecost.

(*As they disappear from view Warawan gets up makes a gesture of scorn toward the back of Mistress Drew. On his face is keenest intelligence*).

WARAWAN—Warawan will be friend to little angel one, the Great Spirit hears the red brother say it.

CURTAIN

ACT II

(A year later).

The scene is the same as in first act, but centers at the town brook, back of and a little below meeting-house hill.

It is afternoon of a summer day.

At the brookside are several goodwives and a woman-child of ten years.

The women are dressed in rather sober colors, regulation Puritan costume. Their sleeves are drawn up to the elbows and their skirts are gathered up. They are washing new cloth and skeins of flax and yarn in the brook.

The little girl in brighter blue with cap, collar and cuffs of white is a small edition of the women. She has a gay, elfin face and sprightly body. She is engaged with filling a small sack with butternut leaves to be used for coloring cloth.

As the curtain rises, Goodwife Drew, stout, red and choloric, stands erect, holding aloft and scrutinizing a skein of flax she has been washing.

Goodwife Drew—Ay, 'tis a year gone since they came, a year.

Goodwife Stetson—Methinks I see them now as they came filing from the greenwood shade. 'Twas a goodly sight.

Goodwife Drew—(*Biting off her words*). Last of all came the yellow-haired wench wi' an armful of flowers.

Widow Palmer—(*Sighing romantically*). Aye,

it was plain as plain, love at first sight twixt Parson's son and Goldie Locks. Their love has grown apace this little year.

GOODWIFE STETSON—I doubt not they'll wed soon. In truth they are well mated.

MISTRESS DREW—Nay, 'tis not true, they will not wed.

GOODWIFE PRATT—Thou canst not change the ways of Providence with thy say so, neighbor. 'Tis true they are in love. Best swallow it and done with.

GOODWIFE STETSON—Ay they are in love, 'tis as plain as the nose on my face.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Sharply*). Then 'tis plain enough.

GOODWIFE PRATT—(*Peaceably*). All has been hastened by the maid's loss. I knew the aged man was marked for death and I did say as much.

GOODWIFE STETSON—Ay, verily 'twas so. He scarce had gathered up his little school when he was gone. 'Twas well Mistress Naomi did find so soon one in our midst to love her.

GOODWIFE PRATT—They say Master Sylvester scarce can bear to go away to finish college now it takes him from her side.

GOODWIFE STETSON—They say the Parson has sent o'er to bonnie England for some goods to furnish forth the wedding.

GOODY—Aye an' Parson's house is soon to be enlarged and beautified for Master Sylvester's bride.

(*Mistress Drew and her two younger daughters look at one another darkly*).

WIDOW PALMER—Think you good Mistress Drew, the selectmen long will permit Naomi Dick-

inson to keep the house she now is in?

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Sharply*). 'Twas builded for the teacher; an' one comes out goes she.

(*Slaps her yarn up and down in the water vigorously*).

WIDOW PALMER—(*In love with Goodman Shepard*). Prithee, Goodwife, dost like the latest plan Mistress Naomi is entering on, of keeping Goodman Shepard's house in trim and caring for his orphans by the day? Methinks it is not seemly.

GOODWIFE DREW—Nay 'tis not seemly. 'Twould be for her best good that she should marry speedily, methinks.

(*The widow looks crestfallen*).

GOODWIFE PRATT—Does Goodman Shepard think to wed again?

GOODWIFE STETSON—Ay they do say he dotes on Pentecost.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Hotly*). They say! They say! They say!

LYDIA DREW—They say are liars.

GOODWIFE PRATT—But is there truth in't, Mistress Drew, tell us thy neighbors?

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Very excited*). Nay, it is not so, for I have other plans for Pentecost who am her mother and do wish her best. Let Goodman Shepard look elsewhere.

GOODWIFE PRATT—'Tis certain the two young Shepards dote on Mistress Naomi.

MARGARET STETSON—(*The child, who has missed nothing of what has been said*)— Ay, they would like her for their mother well.

GOODWIFE STETSON—Keep silence, Margaret.

MARGARET—(*Persistently*). She sings to them

so sweet.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Bitterly*). 'Tis such as she do sing the very hearts out of grave men that have other need than that of song-birds for to help them lead God's people in the ways of grace and truth.

WIDOW PALMER—(*Retaliation in her eye*). How dost thy Pentecost, good Mistress Drew? Methought her cheeks were lacking their wild rose when last I looked upon her, but 'tis true thy daughters are not young as once they were

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Tartly*). But they are not so old as to be second hand. I understand not Pentecost, but she is mine and she shall be whatever I do bid, do what I say or give good reason else.

MISTRESS STETSON—They do say Master Sylvester's to receive a famous English dresser when he's wed.

MISTRESS DREW—Well, the time's no come yet, let the lad get his schooling.

LYDIA DREW—Aye he'll not be finished till September, he told Pentecost.

(*The other women look wisely at one another*).

WIDOW PALMER—(*Mincingly*). Aye, he told Pentecost.

MISTRESS STETSON—At Parson's house, of late, I saw the wedding chest Master Sylvester's making for his bride, 'tis carved all o'er with coat of arms and letterin'. Would it not be well we all should make a gift unto his bride?

ABIGAIL DREW—We could most easy fill the chest for Pentecost. I'll give a table cloth of honeycomb design to my dear sister.

LYDIA DREW—An' I'll give towels to match.

GOODWIFE STETSON—(*Noncommittally*). Aye,

Penetcost is a great favorite with us all who know her worth.

WIDOW PALMER—But I knew not that the worshipful Minister's good son came to thy house still, kindly Mistress Drew.

MISTRESS DREW—(*In a tempest of rage*). Dost thou know every move of the settlement? What is't to thee who seeks my daughter? (*Looks angrily at the other women*). Or thee, or thee, or anyone indeed. Have done or thou wilt rue it.

MISTRESS PRATT—Nay, Goodwife Drew, she meant not any harm, for we all have heard it gossiped that Master Sylvester is in love with the maid Naomi, and since she has no kin, if she be his choice 'twould be a kindly act on all our parts to fill her wedding-chest and wish her well.

GOODWIFE DREW—They will not wed. Think you that one who has known love for my Pentecost could turn from her to loving a mere witch?

GOODWIFE PRATT—Nay, say it not! Thou knowest 'tis not true. The maid is innocent, ay and most lovely.

GOODWIFE STETSON—Moreover, Master Sylvester never has declared himself for Pentecost.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Bitterly*). Thou knowest much that is not thy business.

GOODWIFE STETSON—I am for truth howe'er it may distress thee neighbor.

WIDOW PALMER—'Tis a great hardship for the lass that she's so beautiful. Oho, I could fall in love with her myself.

GOODWIFE DREW—Ay, thou could'st fall in love with anything that chanced to look thy way. 'Tis wearisome to see thy lovelorn state.

WIDOW PALMER—Dost say so, nay do not thou test me, look the other way.

GOODWIFE STETSON—As thy friend, Goodwife Drew, I warn thee keep a guard upon thy tongue. 'Twill carry thee too far. Whether men seek or whether women wed is in God's plan I take it. Let be, let be, neighbor.

GOODWIFE DREW—Aye, sit down in a peck-measure and let blithsome fate deal as she will. So, chicken-hearted one thou art afraid of truth, canst not bear to hear things called by their own proper names? I say she is a witch and thou for one had'st best keep thy eye upon thy Margaret, already she's affected.

WOMEN—Hush! Hush! Hush! Hush! Thou art mad.

MISTRESS DREW—Nay, very sane in truth and that I'll prove to thee, or thee or anyone indeed.

MISTRESS PRATT—Aye prove it then, or hold thy peace goodwife. Thou art in danger.

MISTRESS DREW—Aye we are all in danger. Hark ye then, night after night these eyes have seen Mistress Dickinson depart her house, meet on the wood's edge with a black man, and disappear, and though I've watched and watched never yet have I seen her return. Yet in the morn she's back at Goodman Shepard's tending his house and children.

LYDIA DREW—An' looking innocent as a babe.

GOODWIFE PRATT—Have you, too, seen her go at night with this strange creature into the forest, Lydia?

LYDIA DREW—Aye, an' so has Abigail, and Goodwife Henchman, too.

ABIGAIL DREW—Certain I have. Come to our house this night and we will show thee. Is not that so Mother?

MISTRESS DREW—Aye, come at nine or ten, my Goodman will be at Council Meeting at the Parson's. 'Tis something after ten that we have seen Mistress Dickinson depart to those incantations in the forest, her like are given to.

MISTRESS PRATT—I would be convinced one way or 'tother, wilt thou come Mistress Stetson?

MISTRESS STETSON—Aye, I'll come.

GOODY—(*Caretaker to the Minister*). And I, if so be I can get away.

WIDOW PALMER—And I.

MISTRESS DREW—I'll convince ye or never speak again.

MISTRESS PRATT—Words! Words! Words! Thou best to keep them all behind thy lips till we are once convinced.

(*Suddenly Goodwife Drew stands erect and takes the attitude of one listening intently to some distant sound. She gestures for silence. As they listen Warawan appears from the woods. He makes a friendly gesture toward the group and comes to the spring in the rock to drink. He has been hunting and carries a pair of grey squirrels*).

GOODWIFE DREW—Good neighbors, I hear singing. Methinks she comes of whom but now we spake. Is it not strange she should come hither now?

WIDOW PALMER—Aye, passing strange she should so oft' appear when spoke of.

CHILD MARGARET—Aye mother, like an angel,

unawares.

MISTRESS STETSON—(*Pulling the child aside*). Hush Margaret come with me into the shadow of the trees till she hath past.

CHILD MARGARET—(*Pulling back*). Nay, I would see Mistress Naomi who is so beautiful and sings so sweet.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Bitterly*). Ay, sings, sings an' her own father but six months in his grave. A loving daughter truly.

CHILD MARGARET—(*Rebukingly*). Say you not so, Mistress. Schoolmaster is not there, he is six months in Heaven. Mistress Naomi hath told me so. She knows.

GOODWIFE STETSON—Keep silence, Margaret.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Darkly*). Ay, when I was a child 'twas a word an' a blow an' the blow first for frowardness.

CHILD MARGARET—Hush! Hear the singing. Truly 'tis Mistress Naomi. There is no sound like her voice in the wood.

GOODWIFE PRATT—Ay, more than one is of thy way of thinking, chick, (*cackles and looks knowingly at Goodwife Drew who grows blacker. A voice close at hand is heard singing*).

VOICE OF NAOMI—Oh, God, thou art my God, early I will for Thee enquire. My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh for Thee has strong desire.

(*Naomi Dickinson appears from out the woods on the extreme left, beyond the brook. Two children, a boy and a girl of six and seven years are with her. They carry great bunches of green herbs, and in either hand she has an Indian basket, heaped with*

blueberries. Her gown of coarse blue, faded from many washings, and ungraceful in design, cannot wholly conceal her natural graces. Her cap dangles from the arm of the little girl and her golden hair is garlanded with wild flowers which the children have woven into a wreath. Much of her charm lies in the fact of her unconsciousness of her radiant beauty as she approaches the women at the brookside. Her very lovliness kindles afresh the rancour of Mistress Drew, but the faces of the other women soften as she approaches. The two younger daughters of Mistress Drew eye her with envy).

NAOMI—Good-morrow, friends. (*Holds up her baskets, smiling*). See from the generous storehouse nature keeps how I have gathered all that I can bear. Wilt thou not share with me, kind neighbors? (*Gestures to the others*).

(*She smiles at Warawan and sets down her baskets. She stoops to the spring that gushes from the rock and drenching her hand dampens the warm foreheads of the children, then catching some water skillfully in her palms, she gives them to drink*).

(*The women continue to gaze at her*).

GOOEWIFE DREW—(*Turning upon the little girl sharply*). Dost know thy catechism, Patience?

(*The child hides her face in Naomi's dress turning and twisting about*).

NAOMI—(*Laughing*). She hath, today, begun to learn, goodwife. Tell what thou knowest, little Patience. (*The child remains silent*).

NAOMI—Nay, little Patience, be not so shy of thy newfound knowledge. Wilt speak, child?

PATIENCE—(*Stubbornly*). Nay, I'll not say it now. (*Looks distastefully at Goodwife Drew*).

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Harshly*). 'Twere well an' thou taught her obedience to her elders whom she has seen, then may she the more readily obey Him who is unseen.

NAOMI—Unseen? Nay, goodwife, God is not unseen by them that love Him. He walks abroad in the beauty of this wilderness. (*Her face assumes a rapt expression*). I see Him everywhere.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Meaningly*). Ay, I have heard of eyes that see what others cannot see. (*Makes some motion quickly with her hands*).

THE CHILD MARGARET—Why does Mistress Drew cross her thumbs so, mother? (*Crosses her own thumbs*).

(*The two little children cross their thumbs and dance about Margaret*).

GOODWIFE STETSON—(*Breathlessly*). Hush, Margaret.

MARGARET—(*Big-eyed*). Why does Mistress Drew cross her thumbs so?

(*Crosses her own*).

(*All look askance*).

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Angrily*). 'Tis all eyes, thy child, neighbor.

GOODWIFE STETSON—(*Calmly*). Ay, she sees clearly, very clearly. Come Margaret, come away.

MARGARET—(*Wistfully smiling*). The trees and the flowers are God's thoughts, is it not so Mistress Naomi?

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Quickly*). Nay, the Al-

mighty sitteth in the Heavens. His thoughts are afar off. Fear Him.

NAOMI—(*Bending over the children*). He took children in His arms and blessed them, saying, "Suffer them to come unto Me for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

(*Warawan and the three children look at her entranced*).

(*Goodwife Drew with a gesture draws the attention of the other women to the faces of the Indian and the children. Again she makes the motion with her hands. Goodwife Stetson with a look of fear seizes little Margaret and hurries up the path toward the settlement. Naomi and the children wave to the little girl and she calls back to them*).

MARGARET—Sing more sweet Mistress Naomi. Often I hear you singing in my dreams and know that you are near me.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Again crossing her thumbs*). Present and yet not present.

GOODWIFE PRATT—(*Kindly*). Nay, maiden, sing no more I caution thee. Have not the wise selectmen decreed that, henceforth, only in the meeting-house shall voice be raised in praise. It is not seemly so to sing and chant.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Sourly*). Ay, thou art making light of Holy Psalms with thy continual tum te tum, te tum. The selectmen shall hear of this, be sure, and you'll be brought to task. Leave singing to the heathen. (*She glances at Warawan but he apparently does not heed*).

NAOMI—(*Wistfully*). I sing for gladness of my soul, goodwives. Here in the beauty of the wilder-

ness, in the vast silences, in our common life, I have found God. I know that He is here. Ah, the great happiness I know makes my lips move in praise, nay, I must sing, goodwives. (*Warawan begins sotto voce an Indian chant*).

GOODWIFE PRATT—(*Kindly*). 'Twere safer thou wert spinning, I do think, or carding of the wool, knitting at least.

ABIGAIL DREW—Ay, right, whilst others of thy age are hard at work thou art at child's play berryin' in the fields. Thou wilt need raiment ere the year is gone. Who's to supply it, think you?

(*A shrewd and sinister look takes possession of her face*).

LYDIA DREW—Wilt thou marry then or go like the lilies of the field that do not spin?

WIDOW PALMER—Ha! Ha! Methinks the Selectmen would have somewhat to say to her if so she chose.

NAOMI—(*Distressed and puzzled*). Neighbors, ye know I have not that with which to spin (*suddenly brightening*) but I do know for certain that my God has me in His safe keeping, I shall not want, indeed I shall not want. Come little ones, come home. (*Picks up her baskets and starts up the path*).

(*The women have wrung out their cloth and yarn and are ready to follow toward cabins*).

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Calling after Naomi*). Be not in such haste lest thou break thy tryst, Mistress Innocence. (*She looks meaningly down the path to the left*).

GOODWIFE DREW—Come neighbors, let's be gone.

Ye'll not forget tonight. I'll prove my words or never speak again.

(*Women exit by path that leads to settlement and Warawan suddenly is gone among the trees. John Sylvester comes up the path from the left with some newly sawn planks on his shoulder. His face lights up with pleasure as he sees Naomi*).

SYLVESTER—Spirit of loveliness and grace, do I indeed behold thee?

NAOMI—(*Shyly*). Nay, it is I only, Master Sylvester, mystified, provoked by some misunderstanding, I know not what it may be, with my good neighbors, yonder. (*Points to the disappearing women*).

(*The two children run to him and he puts down his planks to toss first one child and then the other in the air*).

SYLVESTER—Well met, small Shepard, and well met Patience, hast thou been with my lady in the fields? (*Both children nod gleefully*).

LITTLE GIRL—Is our lady thy lady, Master Sylvester?

SYLVESTER—(*Heartily*). The only lady in the world for me, chick. (*To Naomi*). Give me to drink from thy hand, dearest heart, as I have often seen thee give to these (*indicates the children*).

NAOMI—Nay, for I must be gone, friend. I have work to do. Come little ones.

SYLVESTER—(*Tenderly*). Give me to drink, dear heart, and thou shalt go, perhaps.

(*She looks at him as one who must be obeyed, puts her hands together, and fills the hollow with spring-water. He stoops and drinks*).

SYLVESTER—Sweet, I do drink to that most lovely one who has my heart in keeping.

NAOMI—(*Breathlessly*). Master Sylvester!

SYLVESTER—Say John, my heart's love.

NAOMI—Nay, nay, I am not worthy.

LITTLE BOY—Master Sylvester, tell me what means it to cross the thumbs so? (*Crosses his thumbs*).

SYLVESTER—(*Not much heeding*). My little Shepard it means naught at all.

NAOMI—Nay, friend, I pray thee tell. I would know, too. Quick, for I must be gone.

SYLVESTER—Thou shalt be gone when 'tis my will, Sweeting, not before. Tell me— (*He seizes her hands and holds them against his breast*). Tell me, wilt thou be my wife? I love thee, Naomi, only thee forever.

NAOMI—Nay, 'tis not fitting, friend, indeed it may not be. I am so poor, I am so alone.

SYLVESTER—(*In deep tone*). Then will I go unwed, Naomi.

NAOMI—(*Distressed*). Nay, say not so, dear friend, for thou mayst choose of all the settlement the noblest and the best. I who am thy friend do —do wish it.

(*He turns her face up to his and looks her in the eyes. She closes her eyes, strives to turn her face away*).

SYLVESTER—(*Smiling tenderly*). Say after me— I do not love thee, never can love thee, sir.

NAOMI—I—I.

(*He presses her face to his breast*).

SYLVESTER—Thou canst not say it. Thou art

truth itself and thou dost love me as I love thee, Sweet. Its settled, Naomi. Say, I love thee, John.

NAOMI—(*Smiles and tears*). I love thee, love thee, love thee. (*They kiss*).

SYLVESTER—To-morrow I go back to college, love, one little month more and I shall return to claim my bride, my rose of wilderness.

LITTLE GIRL—(*In shrill voice*). Master Sylvester, what means it when the thumbs be crossed so?

(*Crosses her thumbs*).

SYLVESTER—(*Suddenly aware of the two children*). A plague on the little midges. What aileth thee, child? Who so crossed the thumbs?

LITTLE GIRL—'Twas Mistress Drew, so please you sir.

LITTLE BOY—(*Dancing about impishly*). Ay, crossed and crossed and crossed her very thumbs.

SYLVESTER—What mean the little sprites, Naomi?

NAOMI—(*Still within his arm*). 'Tis true the Goodwife made a gesture of that sort when I was talking with her today.

SYLVESTER—(*Disgustedly*). 'Tis but a pagan charm for driving witches off. I did think better things of Mistress Drew than she should deal in such absurdities.

NAOMI—Witches, say'st thou, and why here, to cross her thumbs where we are neighbors true?

(*A shadow passes over his face and is gone*).

SYLVESTER—Let us forget it, sweet, 'tis nothing worth. Say rather, again, thou dost love me and will love forever and for aye.

NAOMI—Thou knowest, nay my very heart that sings for praise and love hath brought me condemnation but today. And thou dost truly, truly, care for me?

SYLVESTER—I love thee for all time and after time. That bright spirit full of hope and joy is like a spur to urge me to the heights that God doth destine for me. Naomi?

NAOMI—My Minister, and my friend, and lover, too, what would'st thou?

SYLVESTER—Shine on me like a light from God and help me strive to work His works Whose call I would obey.

NAOMI—Love, I would rather be thy mate and aid to make this wilderness a heavenly spot than be enthroned queen of the greatest state the world doth know to-day.

SYLVESTER—Happily spoken like my own angel. Let us go. Come little ones, come now.

(*Turns to the children. They are seen to be frisking about with their thumbs persistently crossed. A cloud passes over Sylvester's face, Naomi turns pale*).

SYLVESTER—Foolish ones, what mean you? (*Replaces his arm about Naomi*). Let it not fret you, sweet.

LITTLE BOY—(*Mischievously*). We would keep the Evil One away.

LITTLE BOY AND GIRL—Away! Away! Away! (*They circle about the two with crossed thumbs*).

(*From the woods near the settlement Mistress Drew is seen observing the love scene. Lurking in the opposite wood Warawan sees the woman and the lovers. His face has a look of keen intelligence*).

WARAWAN—Angel One has great need of her red brother. Warawan will care for her. The Great Spirit hears Warawan say it.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene I

(Fall of the same year).

Interior of Minister's house.

The main room, entrance to left (front) a ladder in far right hand corner leads up to loft.

At right hand, near front of stage, a door leads to leanto.

The room is of sawn boards with heavy beams across the ceiling, smoke darkened.

At back of room is huge stone fire-place (12x15) with large log smouldering. There is a crane with brass pot hanging from it, and stone seats on either side inside the fireplace.

A bread-peel hangs on left of chimney and brass warming-pan on the right.

Over the fireplace and from the beams are hung strings of dried apples and bunches of drying herbs.

An English dresser stands at the left wall with brass and pewter in neat order.

Over the dresser on some antlers hangs a flint-lock and a sword.

In the center of the room a table-board on trestles is set for the evening meal. It is covered with a snow-white cloth.

Three square wooden trenchers are set, one at head of table one at foot and one opposite fire, at each place there is also a pewter spoon, a knife, and a stone mug with handle.

A large round wooden trencher stands before the place at the head of the table.

A short bench, on trestles, stands before head and foot of table and one at the end facing the fire.

The burning log partially lights the room and on a flat stone in front of the fireplace and leaning against it is a pine torch burning brightly.

As the curtain rises Goody, the caretaker, is seen lifting the brass pot from the crane. She sets it on a bench and stirs the contents with a wooden spoon.

GOODY—Methinks he must come soon. What with sick red-skins, tittle tattle and complaint and this and that, they'll keep his tottering feet amove I warrant. (*Sniffs at the ragout in the pot*). I would that Master John might come tonight. 'Tis he knows how to eat and joy my cookery. Eh! What with your colleges and this and that he's never here at all. But ministers mun be made o' course, o' course.

(*There is a sharp knock at the door. Goody opens it and Naomi is seen white and distraught*).

NAOMI—Oh, Goody, I would see the Minister, nay, I must see him speedily. The time is short.

(*Goody puts an arm about her soothingly and leads her in*).

GOODY—Nay, Parson's not here, birdling. Canst not tell Goody what doth ail thee?

NAOMI—(*Wildy*). Doth he yet know what they do say of me, Goody? That I, that I.— An' I'm not mad already I soon shall be, I fear. My brain doth reel with lies, flung at me like poisoned tipped arrows. They say I am a witch!

GOODY—(*Rocking the girl in her arms*). Hush, Hush. It hath been kept from Parson till such time as his son should come home and deal with it as all lies should be dealt with. I am thy friend and they are more, my lamb, believe thee innocent than them that doubt thee.

NAOMI—They say I am a witch. Oh, woe is me!

GOODY—Nay, but thy Love 'll be with us full soon. He'll set all right. Take heart poor lass, poor lass.

NAOMI—Goody, you do believe in me, I know. Oh bless you, bless you, I am more myself at the mere thought.

GOODY—Ay, I believe in thee, I know that thou art good as any angel God e'er sent to this earth to teach the heathen how to love and serve. Thou art a fit mate for thy lover, lass, be of good courage. If thou wouldst mate with the eagle thou must have a strong wing.

NAOMI—(*Lifts her face from the old woman's shoulder and looks into her eyes*). Goody, thou art inspired, I think, a strong wing would bear me far, would it not?

GOODY—Aye, my lass, 'tis thine. Thou art of the stuff of heroes. Tell me now thy message for the Minister. He'll be here soon. Canst thou not wait?

NAOMI—(*With a look of exaltation*). Nay, 'twas nothing worth. Say naught to him, dear Goody, or else say I came to him on the wings of a sparrow and departed on eagles' wings. Say I have fought the good fight, Goody, and have kept the faith. Goody, I love thee. Thou hast saved me I

do think. Strong wings, Goody, I have them now. (*She flings her arms about the old woman, and goes out*).

GOODY—(*Puttering over the kettle*). How many lives since Adam's day have been blasted by gossip. Ah, well, Master Sylvester will set the matter right I warrant.

(*There is a step outside the house. The door opens and the Minister in his black suit comes in. The white band about his neck is not much whiter than his weary old face*).

MINISTER—Ah, Goody, home at last, and very welcome smells the meat and looks the light and cheer to me.

GOODY—(*Bustling about*). Ay, an' full time that ye came, Minister, with everything getting cold and ye like to drop for weariness an' hunger. Sit ye down. (*Fills the big trencher with ragout*).

MINISTER—(*Seating himself at head of table*). Goody!

GOODY—Ay, Minister, comin' (*stands at foot of table and bows her head while he is blessing the meat*).

MINISTER—(*Beginning his meal*). Well may we praise God, Goody. The Indians are better of the pox, of that I am quite sure. Our harvests all are plenteous, and for me, my son will soon return with his new honors from the College. Soon we shall ordain him here, God's Minister, with solemn laying on of hands and reverent prayer.

GOODY—(*Seats herself at foot of table after filling the trencher*). He's worthier of a happier state, methinks.

MINISTER—(*Half laughing*). Goody! Goody! Thy tongue was ever an unruly member.

GOODY—(*Tossing her head*). The Indian, Warawan, was here this morning seeking thee. Hast thou seen aught of him?

MINISTER—Nay what did he desire?

GOODY—That I cannot tell, what with his gestures and his gruntings he made naught plain to me but that he was in the way of being much distraught, and like his betters in this settlement came here to be set right. Ay, poor Master John! 'Tis a life he will lead when he comes to minister to this people.

(*The door opens noiselessly and Warawan comes in. He makes a sort of obeisance to the Minister.*)

MINISTER—(*Beckons the Indian to the table-board*). That's as God wills, Goody, my son has a strong heart and a merry, a conscience clear as crystal and a soul that knows no fear save fear of Mighty God. Give meat to our red brother, Goody.

(*Having finished his meal the Minister pushes his trencher back rises and goes to the fireplace takes some papers from his pocket and sits down on the chimney-seat opposite Warawan.*)

MINISTER—Come Warawan, faithful one, sit thee down and eat, there in my son's place.

(*Indicates the vacant seat at the table. Warawan shakes his head, takes the trencher from Goody and remains on the fireside bench*).

GOODY—Canst thou not rest awhile, Minister, an' not be peering with those tired eyes at yonder studyin'?

MINISTER—I know well Goody, thou would'st have me rust, but I must be about my Father's work.

(*Goody busies herself about the table and dishes. All is serene in the room. Outside there are voices. A knock sounds at the door.*)

GOODY—(*Opening door and peering into the dark turns to the old man by the fire*). 'Tis the Commissioners, Worshipful Sir.

(*Minister rises and goes forward to meet them. The two men enter doff their hats and shake hands solemnly with the Minister*).

MINISTER—I'm glad to greet thee, Mr. Bayley, and thee too Asa Stone, good men and true. Sit ye down and let us talk together for I am lonely with my son still at Harvard.

(*They sit down stiffly at either end of the bench, facing him in his rude chair, at left of fire-place*).

BAYLEY—(*Clearing his throat and glancing furtively at Stone*). Ay, it must be so. When will he be coming back from the College, Minister?

MINISTER—(*Meditatively*). Tonight, methinks he'll come. Day before yesterday he received his honors and was privileged to listen to the orations of learned men, in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He heard words of sacred teaching and such prayers as quicken hearts for great achievement in God's world. Yea he is even now upon the way, methinks, hastening to tell me what transpired I could not go to witness.

STONE—(*Clearing his throat*). 'Tis a keen evening for September, Sir.

MINISTER—Ay, my old bones did feel the chill today. I have been out among our Indians. The pox is not yet gone from them, it has been a hard scourge and a long.

BAYLEY—(*Preternaturally solemn*). Ay, 'twas a pestilence. (*There is silence, broken at last by Stone*).

STONE—We are come of a purpose, tonight, Minister.

BAYLEY—(*Solemnly*). Ay, of a purpose.

MINISTER—(*Scrutinizing them*). Say you so, friends? Well here I am and glad as e'er to serve you in the name of my dear Master and your own. Speak on.

STONE—(*Clearing his throat*). Hast thou heard yet the rumors going round concerning Mistress Dickinson, the maid?

MINISTER—(*Sitting up straight, his hands grasping the arm of his chair*). Tell me if it be anything that with God's aid I yet may remedy?

BAYLEY—'Tis evidenced by some that she hath made a compact with the Evil One and works his works of darkness in our very midst.

MINISTER—(*In a loud voice*). Say ye not so, goodman, for it partakes of blasphemy when said of one so strong in Holy Trust. Judge not, lest haply ye be judged one day by that same measure that ye mete to her. I love the maid as my own blood ay, and believe in her.

STONE—(*Darkly*). If this vile thing be true, she doth not merit pity, righteous Minister.

MINISTER—(*Wearily*). Say on, say on. Knows the poor maid aught of this?

STONE—Ay, the women have many times accused her, called her witch. It is thought best that she be refused communion on next Sabbath. (*Minister groans*). Be not dismayed at what we bring thee with regret. They say that she has cast the Evil

Eye upon thy son, destined by God to guide this people, now thou art ready to lay down the yoke. Think on this thing.

MINISTER—I know that she hath a great love for my son and he for her. Tell me, who hath wrought this fabric of lies in our midst.

BAYLEY—Many have suffered her wiles, Reverend Sir, and ye shall know all. One has been asked to come here who knows the worst. She will lay before us all that has been discovered. Ay, for all do know thou holdest not with witchcraft and its doings and are set against it as the hills out yonder. Hence, 'twas thought best to tell thee ere action was taken.

(*A knocking at the door. Five selectmen enter accompanied by Mistress Drew*).

MINISTER—(*Shaking their hands*). Give you good evening, sirs. I never thought 'twould grieve me thus to greet ye. (*Gestures them to take seats on the bench*). Good even, Mistress Drew.

(*He looks at her searchingly. Her face shows great excitement and determination*).

MINISTER—The honored Commissioners have broken to me the news which ye doubtless have come to speak about. I have a righteous anger at the rogue who started playing with such fearful fire. (*Turns to Stone*). Tell me what action spake ye of if the poor maid is trapped with cunning tongues and pronounced guilty.

STONE—She will be tried before the Council, straightway, and if found guilty extirpated at the least.

SELECTMEN—Ay, away with all workers of sor-

cery! (*Warawan who has sat smoking in the chimney-seat, gets up. All eyes are turned at once upon him. He looks for a fleeting second at Mistress Drew, makes a sort of obeisance before the Minister and goes out*).

STONE—Did Warawan take note of what was said, think you? 'Twas a strange look he cast on Mistress Drew.

MINISTER—He is to be trusted, fear him not. My people, that which has come to us has come to other peaceful men. Let us see to it that we go not rashly but as before God who is supremest Judge. 'Twas good of ye and kindly to come to me when ye need not have come. I will deal righteously as God gives me strength.

(*All look at him tenderly and with pity*).

ISRAEL DREW—We all are sure of that, for ye have been God's messenger to us, Minister.

TORREY—(*Speaking to Stone*). Ye have told him how the maid hath wrought machinations on his son?

(*Stone nods affirmation*).

MINISTER—Sirs, ye know me well and him that is to follow me as shepherd of your souls. He has hid naught from me of his love for this maid. From that day she came amongst us like a beam of light out of the greening wood, he's loved her well. I too love her as my own daughter and should have guarded her more tenderly.

BAYLEY—(*Darkly*). Tho even from the first, perhaps, she wrought her works.

MINISTER—(*Motions for silence*). Because I saw how it was with him who is my well-beloved, I

failed not at all times thru the year to observe with my best endeavors what manner of woman she might be, and now before I learn what 'tis you have to lay before me, let me say that I would stake my life upon her utter innocence of guilt.

MISTRESS DREW—(*Bitterly*). Methinks it is her beauty, like a child's, that now misleads thee Minister. It has misled us all.

ISRAEL DREW—(*Sternly*). Speak when thou art spoken to, woman!

MINISTER—Gently, gently, Israel Drew. Come friends, say now what ye must.

TORREY—(*Rises and reads from a paper*). Mistress Henchman, Mistress Drew, Margaret Stetson, Abigail and Lydia Drew, The Widow Palmer, Freegrace Pettis and others, all have seen her sorceries and do affirm that she hath many times worked sore mischief to them and theirs.

MINISTER—(*In surprised tones*). But the child Margaret dotes upon the maid.

TORREY—Ay, an' against all orders follows her in her mysterious walks in fields and woods. Truly the child has been her undoing.

MINISTER—How so?

MISTRESS DREW—(*Impetuously*). She hath told before me and others how, in the secret places of the forest, she hath met with the agents of the Evil One and has inscribed her name within his book, ay, side by side with Mistress Dickinson.

ISRAEL DREW—Wert thou bidden to speak, woman?

TORREY—Nay, Israel Drew, 'twas what we bid her come for. Let her say if she knows aught that will enlighten us.

MINISTER—(*Regretfully*). 'Tis but a child, the little Margaret, and all who know her know her elfin spirit and fertile imagination, no stress should now be laid upon her words.

MISTRESS DREW—(*Persistently*). But she confesses that she cannot help herself, must follow when she hears the voice of Mistress Dickinson. It matters not where she be, if that voice calls she hears it and must go. She is bewitched indeed.

MINISTER—(*Looking keenly at Goodwife Drew*). I doubt not little Margaret will make a fine writer of fables one day. Proceed, proceed.

MISTRESS DREW—My oldest daughter is bewitched by her. 'Twas thought that Master John, thy son, did favor Pentecost before that Mistress Dickinson did come amongst us. However that be I know that Pentecost did love him.

MINISTER—What signs shows Pentecost of the strange malady?

MISTRESS DREW—Oh, Reverend Sir, she is changed utterly from that sober and submissive maid she was. In place of seemly raiment she doth wish to wear silk flauntingly and all the gewgaws of a sinful worldling.

MINISTER—Nay, Nay! I know the maid well. She has brain to spare. What gives Mistress Pentecost as the reason for her change?

MISTRESS DREW—She says as drab and somber garb and conduct brought her no husband, such as she could take, she will try other means. 'Tis as like her true self as the day the night. Alas, my Pentecost!

MINISTER—She likes a jest well, Mistress Pentecost. She has a nature rich and deep. Who shall

say what our true selves be like when only God doth know and our own hearts? I know my son did like the maiden well, but never did he love her, I am sure. Why Goodman Shepard hopes to wed her he has said.

MISTRESS DREW—(*Angrily*). Nay, they shall not wed, she should have the best, not second-hand man and children not her own to labor for and toil her fingers to the bone. Oh, my Pentecost!

STONE—(*Soothingly*). She hath much to commend her, good looks, a something humorous and a smacking of good sense. I pray God all goes well with her.

MINISTER—She's noble beyond praising I do think. What hath she to say of Mistress Naomi?

TORREY—She says a free man who could pass her by would be a very stick and she so strong upholds your honored son, sir, that the gossips say she must be mad, because they know she loved him and once had hopes.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Weeping stormingly*). Mistress Dickinson hath so bewitched her she knows not what she thinks or what she says. She is beside herself with grief, concealed.

MINISTER—And what of the other daughters, Lydia and Abigail? What say they?

GOODWIFE DREW—They know the truth. They have had countless evidences of evil Mistress Dickinson. They are still young and hardly dare to venture forth after nightfall for fear of the Evil One.

MINISTER—What say'st thou, Israel Drew? Are these things so to thee?

GOODMAN DREW—(*Uneasily*). I am a busy man, Worshipful Minister. I do take the say so of my

women folk, but, if this be not so, 'twill be a sad day in my family. (*Looks grim*). My daughters do affirm that coming on Pentecost suddenly, as she sat at carding wool, she all at once became insensible, staring and rigid, in a sort of trance, and, as they strove to bring the life back to her hands by chafing them, they felt a shadow passing by the door, and saw 'twas Mistress Dickinson who passed, on witching of some sort.

MINISTER—A sinful superstition seized on them. (*Turns to Goodwife Drew*). Go to thy home now, goodwife, I will come anon and talk with thee, and thou shalt know how 'tis with the poor maid.

(*Goodwife Drew goes out reluctantly*).

MINISTER—(*To the men*). Tell me, now, what had the Cowherd, Freegrace Pettis, to set forth?

TORREY—He says as Mistress Naomi did pass one day she stopped to speak of his full apple trees on which the fruit had then begun to form. 'Twas not two weeks before his promised harvest was nipped in the bud and the fruit withered up without a cause.

MINISTER—His trees were singed by fire. I know full well. I went to see them, helped put out the flame. Had he aught else to say?

TORREY—Ay, she asked him for a jug of milk one night and he had sold it all and could not favor her. He said next morning when he went to drive his cow out with the others it lay in a spasm and all its stomach swelled and like to burst and, afterwards, it died.

GOODY—(*From the leanto, shrilly*). Nay, 'twas not so. My brother skinned the beast and found it was diseased and died o' that.

MINISTER—Goody! Goody!

(*Murmurs of wrath from the leanto*).

MINISTER—(*Smiling at Goody*). Pray Sirs, forgive her, and proceed.

TORREY—The saddest bit of all that's claimed, to me, is, that the little children she has nursed for farmer Shepard, now say with solemn earnestness that she has made them witches.

MINISTER—They know not what they say and think 'tis something that's desirable. Poor little ones, I know they love her well.

TORREY—They say the birds talk to her in the woods and she does answer them in their own tongue.

MINISTER—Does Goodman Shepard yet know what is said?

TORREY—He is not one to notice what doth pass, he's all for's work.

MINISTER—Would God that might be said of others too. You spoke of Goodwife Henchman, too, I think.

TORREY—Ay, she has said that often from her house at dead of night, when sleep seemed far away, from the window, she hath seen the maid Naomi Dickinson venture forth again and yet again; only once, altho she did watch well saw she the maid come back. Others affirm the same.

MINISTER—And that one time saw she the maid return?

TORREY—A black man came with her to the edge of the wood and she came on alone.

MINISTER—Nay, friend, that I cannot credit. The idle mind is guilty of strange sins of the imagination, that I know full well, and that the women of our settlement are sick of that malady, I am convinced.

GOODMAN STONE—(*Sternly*). I have known my women folks to err, it may be—nay, but we must

hold firm God's faith in this our settlement.

TORREY—Ay, we must keep sacred that which has been committed unto us.

GOODMAN DREW—(*Darkly*). Almighty God, can we be wronging her?

MINISTER—By all that ye hold sacred it is so, and every accusation that ye bring can be explained I doubt not. Oh my good people, think on this woeful thing, a maid that has known sorrow and has kept her soul bright with God's promises who has done countless goodnesses to you and yours, caught in a network malice malign has wrought. And I did not cry out upon such sin, I doubt not God would save the maid.

GOODMAN STONE—I did come with frank and open mind and I do like the maid but for the safety of our settlement I council that she be brought at once to trial. If she be innocent, God will be on her side.

TORREY—'Tis well said. Our intent in coming here was true. We must ever hold the standards high that men must live by if they bide with us. Let her come to trial.

MINISTER—(*Covers his face with his hands. There is silence for a moment then he lifts his face*). Good friends, I know the maid is innocent, but let peace reign amongst us. If ye will it so, let us go now, seek out the maid and notify her of the decree, the rest lies in your hands, arrest her if you must. Yet be forewarned, the maid is innocent. God himself will save her. Come, let us go hence.

(*All arise, as they move solemnly toward the door there is a clamor outside, loud knocking on the door. Goody rushes in from leanto to open it and there falls in, half beside herself, Mistress Drew, supported by her young daughter, Lydia, and followed by other*

women.)

MINISTER—Nay, nay, Mistress Drew, calm thyself. (*Turns to the others*). Let not all speak at once. What betides, Lydia?

LYDIA—Alas, sir, as my mother was returning from your house, at about ten of the clock, she stopped for a moment's confab at Goodwife Henchman's and they both saw Mistress Naomi Dickinson meet with the Black Man at the edge of the dark woods that is nearby.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Hysterically*). Aye, she is gone with that vile Prince of Darkness whom she serves. Together they hold evil tryst in the deep forest.

GOODY—(*Maliciously*). Let's after them, I would I might see the Devil's face better to dodge him hereafter.

MISTRESS HENCHMAN—Nay, Goody, do not jest, for what we see, may yet condemn the maid.

MINISTER—Let us go and seek her, and so make sure what 'tis befalls and not on slightest pretext pronounce her mad or bad. I know the maid is innocent, I am not afraid. Come my people, if ye be as honest in your contention of her guilt, follow me.

MISTRESS DREW—Aye, so we will, I see ye doubt our words. Well, we shall see what we shall see.

(*Exeunt all, except Goody, minister leading*).

GOODY—(*Putting the room to rights*). I am no deaf and the door is fu' o' cracks. Oh, these blunderin' conceited men, that canna see an inch beyond the nose! Could they no guess 'twas jealousy prompted Mistress Drew's tale? Sure 'tis a bitter pill not one daughter wedded yet. I'm no sayin' Mistress Drew's no honest but fair mad wi' jealousy she is for

sure. Now, my poor lassie! What to do for thee. Aye, she'll need her sunshine now, poor Naomi. Gone with the Black Man, ha! ha! ha! ha! Nay, my poor, poor lamb, Goody will save thee yet. Trust thy Goody, lassie.

(*Takes a cape from a nail on the wall, wraps it about her and goes out*).

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene II

The stage is darkened totally. The back set should represent the dark forest. The curtain raised reveals by torchlight several wigwams set in a wooded place. From out the gloom at the left, Warawan emerges, leading Naomi by the hand. She wears a long dark cloak and gauntlets. Her hood has fallen back and reveals her face and golden hair. At a low call from Warawan several Indians and squaws appear from the wigwams. They have torches and the place is quite lighted by them.

Naomi—(*Addressing squaw*). Weetacum how is your man this night? Let him be brought forth that I may dress his sores. He is not patient and I fear will bear the plague marks all his life long for it. (*The sick Indian is brought out on bankets and Naomi kneels spreading ointment upon his sores and binding them with lint. Warawan stands by holding back her cloak that her hands may be free. His expression is one of love and reverence. As she works there appear to the left, amongst the brush, the faces of the minister, Mistress Drew, Drew, Lydia and others. They are motionless and the awestricken expressions tell their own story of understanding and dismay*).

Naomi—(*Rising at last*). 'Tis a sad scourge, Warawan. Have Fleet Foot brought forth now. (*A young brave is brought out. It is apparent that*

he is very sick. His head moves constantly from side to side and his hands pick at the blanket).

NAOMI—(*Sadly*). He is burning away with fever. Get me a porringer, Warawan. I will bestow the best I know to quiet him. It will not suffice I fear to save his young life. (*Quite loudly*). Fleet Foot, dost thou know me? I am Mistress Naomi, thy friend.

(*The young brave puts his hands together upon his breast as if in prayer*).

NAOMI—(*Her hand on his forehead*). Aye, Fleet Foot, the Great Spirit listens. All that you would have Him know He knows. Be at peace my brother.

(*She rises to attend a squaw who has come from one of the wigwams with a sick papoose on a little rug*).

NAOMI—Ah, it is Little Pigeon, lay him down, good mother. (*She croons over the baby as she annoints his sores*).

NAOMI—(*To the squaw*). Thou did'st not bind his hands as I bid thee. He will bear pox scars for all these hurts that so distress him now. Poor little brother! Nay, nay, let him cry. It is but natural. I hurt him so.

(*She binds the child with lint and bandages. Warawan stands over her anticipating her every want. When she has finished she goes toward one of the wigwams*).

NAOMI—I will but glance in at the others, Warawan, to-morrow night I'll attend them.

(*She is gone but a moment and comes forth her eyes very big and dark*).

NAOMI—Warbeck is no longer there, Warawan. His place is empty. Has the Great Spirit called him?

(*The Indian bows his head*).

NAOMI—It is well, my brother. Shall we go now?

(*She looks up at the starry night, then at the group of dejected Indians about her*).

NAOMI—So beautiful a world, Warawan, God is in it, sure all will be well with us, the scourge will soon be gone. Bid them all be of good cheer, my brother Warawan, say in the settlement we pray the Great Spirit may restore them soon.

(*She stands with raised hands clasped as tho praying. One or two Indians come and touch her cloak. She goes away slowly hand in hand with Warawan. The Indians go about their business. At length the Minister and his companions appear from the brush*).

GOODMAN DREW—(*Pale and grim confronts Goodwife Drew*). What have you to say now, woman?

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Wailing*). Woman! and I his lawful wife.

MINISTER—Be patient with her, Israel.

(*He goes about among the wigwams speaking to the Indians*).

GOODMAN DREW—(*Sternly*). Naught but confession, sir, will bring relief. She suffers from a fit of conscience. Speak woman and be free.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Moaning*). I am not all evil. Neighbors, hear me now. My heart had gone out after covetousness. I was angered at the maid, Naomi, and accused her wrongfully, but I did think she was bewitched. Oh, I repent me, but what can I do else?

MINISTER—Calm thyself, Mistress Drew, all shall yet be well.

GOODWIFE DREW—Nay, not for me, my lies were

spun of hateful jealousies, my sins be on my own head.

GOODMAN TORREY—Ay, Minister, our sins be on our own heads, did we not all condemn the maid, unheard, she who has ministered to us and ours since first she come amongst us.

MINISTER—(*Sadly*). Ye do repent, I know. Fear not! God's overwhelming hand will set all right. Is His arm shortened, think you? Be at peace. Show forth your repentance, all, in goodness to the maid. Nay, never let her guess what has transpired. Come, let us go to our homes now. The hour is late.

(*Exit all thru woods*).

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene III

Interior of Schoolmaster's house where Naomi has lived with her father and still lives when not at her daily tasks at Goodman Shephard's house. Fireplace with seats. Table board and trestle seats as in Minister's house. A few shelves against the wall, map on the wall, etc. A lighted torch in the chimney place dimly shows Goody entering the room dressed as when she left the Minister's.

Goody—Naomi Dickinson, where hast thou hid thyself? I am Goody, thy heart's true friend, come forth.

(*Flings aside her cape impatiently and going to the hearth stirs the logs to a glow*).

Goody—Nay, lassie, do not keep me waiting. I have news for thee that's urgent.

(*Lights a candle on the table*).

Goody—(*Impatiently*). Where is the lass, out at this hour of night.

(*Goes to the door puts her hands about her eyes and peers into the dark*).

Goody—(*Calls out*). Oh, there thou art. Naomi! It is I, thy Goody waiting thee. Who's with thee child? Oh, I see 'tis Warawan, bring him hither.

(*Enter Naomi followed by the friendly Indian*).

Goody—Hast been to visit the sick, Naomi? I thot thou would'st never come.

Naomi—Why Goody, dear friend, what art thou

doing here at this late hour?

(*She puts her hands on Goody's cheeks affectionately*).

GOODY—(*Gravely*). How much doth Warawan comprehend think you, Naomi, of our sayings and doings in the settlement?

NAOMI—There's little that escapes him Goody, 'tis a bright brain and a ready wit and hand. Why do you ask, friend?

GOODY—Is he true, think you?

NAOMI—I would trust him with my life, Goody. He's as true as steel.

GOODY—(*Beckons the Indian from his seat by the hearth*). Listen, both. I am but now come from a meeting at the Minister's where I was present yet not present. Being in the leanto and the door full of cracks I did plainly overhear the selectmen and the council speak of the accusation that jealousy and idle tongues have brought against thee, Naomi.

NAOMI—(*Takes Goody's hands in hers*). Do not waste words, Goody, the hour is late, tell me at once, what decision did they come at regarding me?

GOODY—(*Angrily*). The Minister did stand for thy innocence lass. Aye, he did speak for thee most valiantly.

NAOMI—Goody, Goody dear friend do not fear to tell me.

(*The Indian stands with averted face, listening intently*).

GOODY—The others did adjudge thee guilty, sweet, they will come anon to arrest thee. Thou wilt be tried on the morrow. What thy fate might be I know not, if thou didst bide to see. But thou shalt not so bide to be the butt of jealousy and superstition.

NAOMI—Hush, let me think. I must think first of him my lover. How it will be with him, if I depart. Will he, too, mayhap think me mad or bad? I could not bear it!

GOODY—And he were here he'd thrust the lie down their throats, poor wastrels. They will not listen to the man of God who's old and wise in understanding of them. Come, make haste lass. I will help thee make ready and Warawan shalt conduct thee by the way thou didst come, back to the Bay Settlement, where, please God, thou wilt be safe.

NAOMI—(*Very white but with exalted expression*). Goody, thou dost advise me well, thou art my true friend. It will leave the field free for my loved one's work for God. I will be gone at once, 'tis best so. Come, help me Goody, I have been making ready to depart when I had once more seen Master Sylvester. Warawan knew, he was to guide me hence.

(*Warawan takes a shawl spreads it upon the tableboard, they place the few belongings of Naomi upon it. Warawan ties it up, stepping about noiselessly. Goody goes to him and puts her two hands on his shoulders, looking into his face*).

GOODY—Warawan, faithful one, dost understand thy task? The Great Spirit asks thee, the Red Brother to guide His child over the rough roads to the Bay Settlement where He will care for her.

WARAWAN—(*With exaltation*). The Great Spirit asks the Red Brother, Warawan knows! Warawan will be faithful. Come! Come! Warawan will guide the angel one. Indian is much happy, woman. The Great Spirit loves Warawan much. Come, come.

GOODY—(*Drying her eyes. To Naomi*). Oh,

lassie, how the heathen shame us who call ourselves the servants of God. Warawan will guide thee. No harm will come to thee save over his dead body. (*Puts her arms about Naomi*). Shall I go with thee, Naomi, say the word. 'Tis breaking my old heart to part with thee, but I believe it's God's will thou should'st go. May his angels be about thee. Ay, they will.

NAOMI—(*Looking into the old woman's eyes*). Stay, Goody, and do thy work here, thou hast been my good angel , do one thing more for me. When Master Sylvester returns, tell him how it was with me and that I loved him far too well to stay and be a hindrance to him. I'm sure that he will know that I was innocent, but tell him that was my last word to thee. Before God I am innocent.

(*She puts her arms about the old woman's neck and hides her face against her shoulder, then turns and takes the hand of Warawan and goes out. Goody stands rocking her body to and fro, her hands over her eyes*).

CURTAIN

ACT IV

Scene I

(*Interior of Minister's house as in Act III, Scene I, except table is not set. Minister sits by the fire*).

Minister—'Tis passing sad evil should come out of good. Poor Mistress Drew, I fear Israel will be hard upon her. He's an upright man. 'Twas the mother's heart coveting for her child made the mischief. I doubt not now her conscience is aroused she'll leave no stone unturned to make it up to the maid. (*There's a clamor outside, loud knocking on the door. The Minister goes to open it and there falls in half beside herself, Mistress Drew. She is supported this time by her daughter Pentecost. Behind them an excited throng is gathered*).

Minister—(*Quickly*). What is it, Pentecost? What ails thy mother.

Goodwife Drew—(*Rocking herself to and fro*). Her blood be on my head! 'Twas I that drove her forth with lies spun from my wicked jealousies.

Minister—(*Taking the woman's hand leads her to a bench*). Nay, Nay, Mistress Drew, now calm thyself. God is over all. (*Turns to the others*). Let not all speak at once. What ails thy mother, Pentecost?

Pentecost—My mother couldn't rest till she had gone to bid the maid Naomi dwell with us, hereafter, and not bide alone in her dead father's house, and she did find the cabin empty and bereft

of that sweet light that has so gladdened it. Naomi has fled, Minister, and taken with her, her little all, no one knows whither.

GOODWIFE DREW—Her blood be on my head. Oh, I have sinned grievously! (*Moans continuously*).

(*Goodman Drew enters the room, looks at his wife distastefully*).

GOODMAN DREW—Have done, woman. Pentecost, canst thou not quiet her? I would be heard.

PENTECOST—(*Her arm about her mother*). She suffers from her conscience, father, be patient with her.

GOODMAN DREW—(*To Minister*). The men have returned and say that Mistress Naomi's not in the Indian fort, Minister. There's no time to lose. She may be wandering in the forest now.

GOODWIFE DREW—(*Breaking out afresh*). Lost! Lost! Lost! Her blood be on my head! I have betrayed the innocent.

MINISTER—(*Taking her hand*). Thou hast repented and confessed. Fear not. God's overwhelming hand will set all right. He will care for His own. Is His arm shortened think you? Be at peace! (*Turns to the others*). Has aught been seen of Warawan? He should be sent at once to seek her. (*Lifts his voice*). Goody! Goody! (*There is no sound from the leanto*). She sleeps through all the clamor. It is well. She may not miss me. Come neighbors let's be gone. (*Takes his soft hat from a peg*).

GOODMAN DREW—Nay, Minister, it is no task for thee. Bide here while we go search until the maid be found. I promise thee no path shall be un-

touched. When I cease to search for her I shall be dead. I'll find the maid or perish.

MINISTER—Do not deny me what is but my right. She is my son's beloved and I go in his stead. Now every man to the work and goodwives, maids, pray without ceasing the while we be gone. Ye may do more than we to bring her back. (*Pentecost is seen bidding Goodman Shepherd Godspeed on the search*).

CURTAIN

ACT IV

Scene II

(One o'clock of the same night).

A bit of forest broken by a bridle-path. Evergreen trees and oaks on either side of path. As curtain rises Naomi and Warawan are seen emerging from the woods at the extreme left of stage. By Warawan's torch their faces are plainly seen. Warawan stops suddenly his intelligent face illumined with joy and relief. He takes a leathen flask from his pocket and passes it to Naomi.

Warawan—Drink, angel one, for we have come at a good pace and long, weary thou must be, but soon thou shalt rest, ay, soon thou shalt rest in safety.

(*While she is drinking he stoops and listens intently. As he rises Naomi looks at him with startled eyes*).

Naomi—What dost thou hear Warawan? Oh friend, tell me if we are followed. I will not go back, nay, I will not go back! Take my life, Warawan, let me sleep here in the forest, all will be well with me.

Warawan—(*Tenderly*). Nay, angel one, the Great Spirit is leading thy red brother. Fear not! No one shall harm thee, Warawan has said it. He hears no followers, he hears—

(*He stops turns toward right of stage and again listens. As they so stand there emerges from forest at right of stage the heroic figure of the young Minister, Naomi's lover, returning from Harvard Col-*

lege. His horse lifts a restless head, the young man sees the torchlight and reins in his horse. Warawan lays one hand firmly upon Naomi's wrist and taking a step forward holds the torch before his face. In his deerskin leggins, leather tunic, moccasins and long hair he presents a striking figure to Sylvester).

SYLVESTER—Warawan, thou art come to meet me. Speak, is my honored father ill?

(*Warawan steps aside and moves his torch backward revealing the lovely face of the girl*).

SYLVESTER—Naomi! Naomi!

NAOMI—(*Wildly, turning toward the Indian*). Warawan, thou hast betrayed me! Oh Warawan who wert my friend!

SYLVESTER—(*Leaping from his horse*). Thou'rt come to meet me, Naomi. Oh what a crown to my joyful day. (*Opens his arms*). Come to me Wilderness Rose!

WARAWAN—Ay, angel one, so the Great Spirit bids thee. Peace be to thee and Warawan's white brother! (*He disappears as if by magic*).

NAOMI—(*Wildly*). Warawan! Warawan!

SYLVESTER—Sweet, I am waiting, come to me.

NAOMI—(*Distraught*). How shall I turn? I know not where to go.

SYLVESTER—(*Advancing and clasping her to his breast*). There is no place for thee but this, the haven of my care where thou shalt stay, beloved and cherished till our God takes thee to Himself. (*Lifts her face up and looks upon it*).

SYLVESTER—(*Sadly*). Only a month have I been gone from thee, how hast thou grown so wan and sad, my sunshine of the wilderness, in but a month's time?

NAOMI—(*Makes as though to withdraw herself*). I must be gone, it is not meet that I should thus be with thee who art now as a minister of God.

SYLVESTER—Thou knowest well my mettle, Naomi. I'll never let thee go. Now, sweet, obey, open thy heart to me. What has transpired since thus I held thee, what darkening cloud has passed across my sun?

NAOMI—(*Harshly*). They say I am a witch and would do ill to thee and this and that one. What hast thou to do with powers of darkness Minister of God? Nay, I must be gone.

SYLVESTER—(*With triumph and confidence*). Look up, Naomi, look me in the face. Canst say in truth that thou so reasonable dost hark to such defaming? Art thou a witch? Nay, dear one, I thought thy sense did too far outweigh sensitiveness to listen to such chatter. Where wert thou going, Naomi, at dead of night with Warawan?

NAOMI—(*Puts her hands over her face*). The little children whom I loved and tended play I have made them witches, oh, I think my heart did break to hear them.

SYLVESTER—Ay, I have heard them say many a time, let's play I'm God, or Satan, or St. Paul. The fancy of the infant mind doth lead to any words that chance to come. Be brave, love.

NAOMI—Ay, so I must and will. It took me long to credit what was said about myself who have so loved this people. But when at last I knew, I vowed a vow that I would never, never ban thy life, my lover and my friend and minister. I must be gone.

SYLVESTER—Nay, thou shalt bless it, sweet, with

all good counsel. I know how all has come about and it is not because I think more highly of myself than a man ought I say I am at fault. Where wouldst thou go dear heart?

NAOMI—I must return to Newtown. There they know me well. There I cannot harm thee. I must go, nay say no more, dear friend.

SYLVESTER—And lover, say it sweet. Naomi 'twas jealousy that brought thee to this place. I have been warned that one I like right well has valiant advocate in her good mother, whose aim these many months has been to banish thee from out our settlement. I should have been here on guard.

NAOMI—'Tis Mistress Drew thou meanest. She hath said that once ere first you saw me you did love her daughter Pentecost, the strong splendid one. I do not blame thee. I love her too!

SYLVESTER—If so she thought, 'twas nothing more than thought. Pentecost is my good friend. She hath a better brain than common and knows how to be companion, sharer of a jest or bit of wisdom. I do like her well, but love her I never did, nor did she me. Our good friend Richard Shepard hath his eye upon her and will wed, if Pentecost will have him, I do know.

NAOMI—Much talking, though it explain, cannot change the state of matters as they stand. I must go, dear friend.

SYLVESTER—Ay, you shall go back with me, my dearest one, of that be sure.

NAOMI—Methinks 'tis hardly fitting I should preach to one destined to be a priest of God. I only bid you think on this and know that as you purpose to perform your service as perfectly as man

may, you must not have a stone thrust under foot to stumble on by one who loves you more than life itself.

SYLVESTER—(*Sternly*). God knows I would perform His will as a man may even to putting aside my heart's desire and going lonely through this earthly life, if there were needed such a sacrifice. But nothing points to such an issue, nay, I feel the very soul of me cry out on such a mockery. Be silent Naomi.

NAOMI—(*Persistently*). Thou wilt not see, nor will I be that stone set for thy stumbling. Let me go back to Newtown whence I came. I will take up my cross with courage there and bear it bravely as a woman may till the death angel bring me my release.

SYLVESTER—(*Kisses her closed eyes*). Ay, thou art ripe for sacrifice both thine and mine, but I will have none of it nor will God either. Ease thy distracted bosom of the thought. I promise thee that ere a week has fled thou shalt be in thy rightful place in our good settlement, honored and beloved.

NAOMI—It cannot be, my friend. It is too late.

SYLVESTER—It must be, dear one, else do I, too, depart. Listen, for the issue is more far reaching, graver, than you know.

NAOMI—Not graver, John?

SYLVESTER—Ay, graver. In the dim fastnesses of the forest I have walked and thought for many a day of this new world and how, upon each who for his soul's sake came into the wilderness there falls a trial of his every part if he be man, ay God's man for the work of building a new nation, and God's woman I would add.

NAOMI—(*Heroically*). I know that thou wilt prove true, be a rock to found upon, my Minister.

SYLVESTER—Yet thou wouldst handicap me for the work by taking all thy strength away from me.

NAOMI—Nay, I would have thee fight and win. Am I not going for that very cause?

SYLVESTER—My life is wrapped up in the enterprise. I seem to see the future looming large with promises that could not be fulfilled in the old world but, in God's providence, may be fulfilled in this.

NAOMI—(*Filled with awe at his vision*). I know how with uprightness and with truth thou wilt lead this people in thy allotted time.

SYLVESTER—And side by side to help me, urge me on, thou, grace informed one, shall keep pace with me.

NAOMI—Ay, in my spirit I will be at hand. The constant prayers I shall be putting up will bear thee on like wings. Farewell, farewell. (*Tears silence her*).

SYLVESTER—Come, welcome tears, and freshen with thy showers the poor crushed heart that else is like to break. (*Holds her to him*).

(*His horse in the thicket shies and acts nervously. Voices are heard and the beating of brush. Goodman Drew, wild of countenance and dishevelled suddenly appears on the path*).

NAOMI—(*Wildly to Sylvester*). If thou dost love me thou wilt take my life, John. I'll not go back, I never will go back.

SYLVESTER—Courage Naomi, let me deal with them. (*To Drew and others*). What do ye here? Call ye one another men? Nay, cowards all doing the Devil's work of persecuting the innocent. What

will ye answer in God's Judgment when ye are called to answer for these black and heinous lies? (*Shaking his fist in Drew's face*). Speak Judas!

DREW—(*Aghast*). Master Sylvester! Master Sylvester!

SYLVESTER—(*Bursting with wrath*). Ay, Master Sylvester, man as well as Priest ye have to deal with now, no unprotected woman. What will ye do in that dread day when ye must answer for all idle words? Out with it, scandalmongers all. What have ye to say?

DREW—(*In horror*). Peace, peace, sir, we—

SYLVESTER—Peace! And what peace gave ye this angel who has served ye all with sweetest ministry? To what extremities have ye driven God's child? Better for ye if a mill-stone were hanged about your neck and ye were drowned in the depths of the sea.

DREW—(*Sternly*). Sir, let me speak.

MINISTER—Speak on!

DREW—(*Doffs his hat and comes to Naomi*). Mistress Naomi, God has bid the storm that late broke over thee to be a calm. It is my bitter sorrow Mistress Drew hath so maligned and troubled thee and she repents now and hath said she is the cause of all. Despite her error she doth worship God and she is half beside herself tonight her sin has scourged her so. Dost thou forgive? Ay, be thy noble self as thou hast ever been. Dost thou forgive?

NAOMI—(*Transfigured*). Ay, Goodman Drew, as before the throne of mighty God I do forgive, fully and freely.

(*Gives Drew her hand*).

SYLVESTER—Is this true, Israel Drew, that thou hast said?

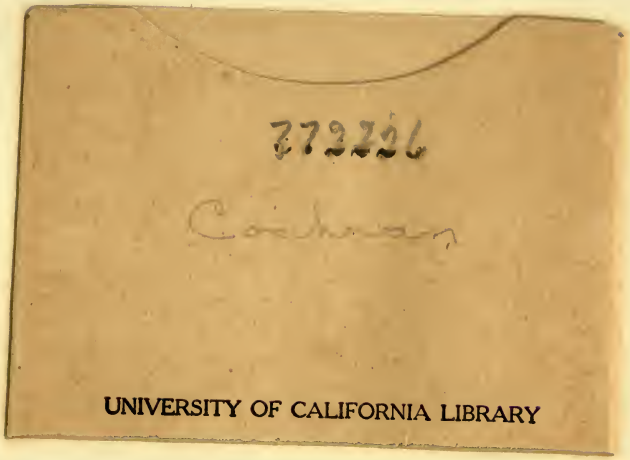
DREW—Ay, Master Sylvester, God be thanked our eyes were opened in season. We know now the maid is innocent. Perchance God's hand was in this trial, for we know thy mettle, now. Thou art a man. (*Grasps Sylvester by the hand*). Let us hasten now I pray, for they do suffer who are left behind thinking that Mistress Naomi is lost.

(*Disappears in thicket with others*).

SYLVESTER—Now is my promise made good, Sweet. They will love thee more than was possible before they sinned against thee. Come, here's my patient horse, mount Naomi, God wills it.

(*He lifts her to the saddle and as he walks beside her Warawan is heard nearby singing a hymn of praise*).

SYLVESTER—'Tis our red brother praising God, Naomi, my heart is in the song.

CURTAIN

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